



Concordia
UNIVERSITY

**Report on
Promotion and Recruitment
1997-1999**

Centre for Native Education
Advocacy & Support Services – Student Services

Submitted to

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In 1997, the Centre for Native Education was given a new mandate to recruit potential Native students and promote Concordia as part of the University's project on Multiculturalism and Issues of Equity. This was considered to be a two-year pilot project. The budget to support the project has been met by a \$5,000 subsidy from a University Trust Account under the direction of the Dean of Students designated for promotion of Native services/activities with the balance of the expenses paid from the Advocacy & Support Services' operating budget. It should be noted that this budget reflected the fact that there already exists a fully operational Centre for Native Education from which to manage this project unlike the Black Community Initiative which began from a developmental position. The Coordinator of the Centre for Native Education was responsible for the direct supervision and organization of the project activities. Through this project the Centre undertook several ventures into Native communities with the goal of sensitizing the Native population to programmes and services the University offers as well as promoting the benefits of a post-secondary education at Concordia. Values stressed were those of an accessible, quality education that could be counted on.

Following is the report on this two-year project.

The Centre for Native Education focused on four strategies to reach the Native population:

- Advertisement in targeted Native publications
- Visits to chosen Native communities and participation in special events
- Networking with other Native organizations
- Open door policy to all Native people

Advertisement

In the last two years, the Centre has taken out ads and listings in Native publications that we believed would reach the greatest number of potential students. For example, the Centre for Native Education is featured and listed as a contact in annual publications such as the James Bay Cree telephone book, the main telephone reference book for all Quebec Cree communities, and the Annual Alberta University Review, a listing of all post-secondary educational institutions that either offer services to Native students or have a Native studies programme. As well, the Centre regularly places ads in the *Eastern Door*, Kahnawake's weekly newspaper; and the *Nation*, a Cree monthly publication. The purpose of these ads is twofold: we advertise our services and encourage Native people to apply at Concordia and, on an annual basis, we congratulate all our graduates and thank all the sponsors of the Centre for Native Education's graduation dinner and dance.

The following is a sample of external publications in which the Centre for Native Education has advertised or placed listings:

- *The Eastern Door*
- *The Nation*
- *The Alberta University Review*
- *First Nations Tribal Directory*
- *The James Bay Cree Telephone Book*
- *Advantage 90's Communicator First Nations Year Book*

Naturally, the Centre continued advertising throughout the university in various handbooks, calendars, web pages and newspapers knowing well that these publications often make their way into the homes and work places of our faculty, staff and students to be shared with others. As well, many articles featuring the Centre for Native Education appeared in Concordia publications, eg. *The Thursday Report*, *The Link*, *Concordian*, *The Bridge* (New Student Programme), etc. The Coordinator has also been interviewed several times about the Centre on local radio.

Promotional visits

The Centre for Native Education has also participated in numerous activities and special events that attract Native people such as pow wows, education symposiums and career days in Native high schools and Cegeps with a significant Native population. Whenever possible, the Centre also makes it a point to participate in any special activity organized by other Native organizations in the Montreal community in order to show solidarity with the urban Native community.

The Centre for Native Education had information booths/tables at the following Pow Wows, Career Fairs and Awareness Days:

<i>April 1997</i>	<i>First Nations Day (Dawson College)</i>
<i>July 1997</i>	<i>Echoes of a Proud Nation Pow Wow (Kahnawake)</i>
<i>August 1997</i>	<i>Listiguj Gathering (Listiguj)</i>
<i>September 1997</i>	<i>Native Friendship Centre Pow Wow</i>
<i>October 1997</i>	<i>Career Fair (Kahnawake)</i>
<i>November 1997</i>	<i>National Aboriginal Career Symposium (Ottawa)</i>
<i>April 1998</i>	<i>Survival School Career Days (Kahnawake)</i>
<i>May 1998</i>	<i>Odawa Pow Wow (Ottawa)</i>
<i>July 1998</i>	<i>Echoes of a Proud Nation Pow Wow (Kahnawake)</i>
<i>June 1999</i>	<i>First Peoples Festival (Montreal)</i>
<i>July 1999</i>	<i>Odanak Pow Wow (Odanak)</i>
<i>July 1999</i>	<i>National Association of Friendship Centres' Annual General Assembly (Montreal)</i>
<i>July 1999</i>	<i>Echoes of a Proud Nation Pow Wow (Kahnawake)</i>

In the last two years, the Centre has also played host to a variety of school and youth groups who came to Concordia with the desire of learning more about post-secondary education and finding out about other services offered to Native people in the Montreal urban area. On such visits, the Centre's staff would typically take groups on a tour of the SGW campus, talk about the different services offered within Concordia and treat the students to lunch. The Centre has also received numerous visits from academic

counsellors who work in remote Native communities and who wish to learn more about what Concordia and the Centre for Native Education have to offer.

Networking

There are a number of Native organizations in Montreal that offer a variety of services to specific clienteles. By networking with these organizations, maintaining regular contact, and supplying ample documentation and literature on the Centre for Native Education and Concordia University, we ensure that our services are well known not only to the staff but to the various clienteles as well.

The Centre for Native Education has networked with the following Native organizations:

- *Beesum Communications (publisher of The Nation and the James Bay Cree Telephone Book)*
- *McGill House for First Peoples*
- *Aboriginal Women of Montreal*
- *Native Parajudicial Services*
- *Cree School Board*
- *Kahnawake Education Centre*
- *Native Friendship Centre of Montreal*
- *Aboriginal Employment Services*
- *Aboriginal Youth Council*
- *Advocacy for Native Adoptees*
- *Awasis Centre*
- *Avataq Cultural Institute*
- *Kahnawake Cultural Centre*
- *Aboriginal Workforce Association of Montreal (now the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Human Resources Division)*
- *Native Women's Shelter*
- *Concordia's Engineering Explorations*

Open door policy

The Centre for Native Education as one of its principle goals serves the particular needs of Concordia's Native student population. And yet, as our visibility increases, Native people who are not students, or who are students in other institutions, are now dropping by for a variety of reasons. The Centre's open door policy has made it a welcoming place to all Native people and the last four years have shown that some regular Native visitors eventually register as students at Concordia.

A case in point is the emergence of a new Native organization which has been getting quite a bit of media attention recently. *Advocacy for Native Adoptees* was founded by a small core of Concordia students but has rapidly grown to include Native people from all walks of life. *Advocacy for Native Adoptees* provides a forum for members to talk about their experiences and helps them reconnect to their cultures and Native identities. By providing a space where *Advocacy for Native Adoptees* could meet, members of the group have been able to network with the Centre for Native Education and with Concordia's Native students. As a result, many of the members of this group are now Concordia students.

Our open-door strategy has paid off in more ways than one. There is undeniably an increase in the Native student population at Concordia (from 62 students in the fall of 1995 to 180 students today). However, it should be noted that an increase in the Native student population would likely have occurred regardless of increased promotional efforts simply because of current demographics. Statistics show that Canada's Native population is the youngest in the country with 56% of Native people listed as under the age of 25. How much of the increase in the Native student population at Concordia can be attributed directly to the Centre for Native Education's efforts at recruiting is unclear. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the Centre has achieved a high profile and visibility in Montreal area Native communities and Native organizations. This increased visibility is yielding impressive results in the number of potential students who approach the Centre for Native Education to inquire about the possibility of attending Concordia or to seek help in filling out application forms, gather required documents, and start inquiring about possible funding sources for their projected studies. In the past two years, the Centre for Native Education has directly and successfully assisted close to one hundred potential students to apply at Concordia.

Promotion and recruitment endeavours would be meaningless if retention rates were poor. This is an area in which we are confident that the Centre for Native Education continues to excel. In fact, even though we strongly believe that the presence of the Centre is enough to attract potential students to Concordia, it is the services as well as our individualized attention to students which account for significantly high retention rates. The Centre enjoys an excellent reputation with both Native students and in the Native communities.

One of the activities that the Centre has encouraged and supported over the last four years is the graduation dinner and dance, a celebration for our Native graduates and their families which puts an emphasis on the academic achievement of Native people. The Centre's graduation dinner and dance has become a celebrated event in the Native community and potential graduates look forward to it with greater anticipation every year. In fact, the word has spread about this special event and we now have graduates from other universities asking if they can join us to celebrate their own personal achievements. With such enthusiasm in Native circles for this special celebration, we are confident that in time, the graduation dinner and dance will prove to be one of our best recruitment tools. Our efforts in the upcoming year will be to concentrate on coordinating with the different faculties those celebratory activities that are organized for students receiving Certificates as well as for those students who are graduating from degree programmes. This combined Native student population that studies on campus and in the community truly reflects the Concordia experience.

The feedback from Native communities to our recruitment, promotional and retention efforts has been tremendously positive and we believe Concordia has gained enormously from the Centre for Native Education's increased profile. However, much still needs to be done if Concordia is to seriously compete with other universities for a good share of the Native student market.

Outreach

As previously mentioned, the Centre for Native Education has made several visits to Native communities to promote Concordia. However, our limited resources have not allowed us to venture to locations where we feel promotion and recruitment are sorely needed. In the last two years, we have been able to go as far as Ottawa and the Gaspé region on three occasions but are unable to reach those remote Native communities that could benefit from our presence. Annual visits to Kahnawake and participation in urban aboriginal events are our main recruitment activities as the Centre for Native Education does not have the personnel available to venture further. As a result, many Cree, Algonquin, Innu, Attikamek, Naskapi, Micmac and Inuit communities are out of reach of our visitation programme. However, we are aware that the university does have courses, training sessions and special events taking place on-site in some of these more remote Native communities. Coordinating distribution of recruitment materials with these on-site programmes and activities is another way to recruit without spending the exorbitant funds necessary for northern travel. Further promotion of Concordia services and programmes of interest to Native students via the INTERNET/WEB as well as pursuing Distance Education options will also add to our success in meeting the university goals of this project.

The Centre is well aware that other universities have invested thousands of dollars in their recruitment display materials and outreach booths to advertise their Native Studies programme and services. Unlike these universities Concordia's Centre for Native Education has been working on a "shoe-string" budget independent of university enrollment management support and our displays have reflected this reality. In comparison with other very professional displays our physical set-up is basic. In August of 1997 when this project was first given to the Centre for Native Education the Office of the Registrar had already finalized their 1998 recruitment programme; publications had already been ordered and visitation schedules in place. While the Registrar's office supplied us with brochures, application forms and some other university materials and, of course, we bring our own information on the Centre's activities and programmes to these outings, it really isn't enough. The Centre's recruitment activities were then and have continued to be adjunct to the recruitment efforts of the university at large. It is our sincere hope that a university-wide Enrollment Management Office will provide the

interdepartmental coordination, materials and logistical support necessary for a more effective and competitive recruitment programme in the future.

The Centre's assets lie with its potential for attracting student ambassadors, its professional expertise on Native issues and its knowledge of Native student concerns and needs. We feel that our activities in both recruitment and promotion were successful. However, our efforts could have had greater impact and our time better spent if we had been working in cooperation with a central recruitment/enrollment office. On-going access to admissions, faculty and PR materials, accompanied by experienced admissions officers and a professional set-up kit would have made the outreach more professional.

Finally, the Centre for Native Education is very limited in terms of having available staff who can concentrate on promotion and recruitment ventures. Apart from the Coordinator, the Centre employs only casual staff i.e. a part-time office clerk and students who work on specific Centre projects. Since providing services to Concordia Native students is the Centre's main mandate and focus, it is difficult to schedule the time and the human resources necessary to participate in all the recruitment activities that deserve our attention without severely understaffing the Centre. Therefore, our recruitment activities have corresponded to those events that could best be integrated into the academic schedule of the Centre and at the same time make best use of our very talented and resourceful students.

Recommendations for future endeavours

If the University intends to pursue its recruitment and promotion efforts past this two-year pilot project, much more can be done to interest and attract Native communities and potential Native students. The following are some recommendations which would considerably increase Concordia's visibility and strength in this market niche.

- **Promotional literature**

The Centre for Native Education's information brochure, the university application forms, admissions materials and individual faculty booklets are not enough to convince Native people to attend Concordia. In fact, a combination of all these documents can sometimes serve to confuse potential students who very often have no idea about what university life entails. A promotional/recruitment brochure specially designed with Native people in mind and outlining the benefits of a higher education while promoting Concordia and the Centre for Native Education would be a great asset. The Centre's information brochure is directed towards current students while this proposed brochure could contain frequently asked questions and answers to help students make their decision about enrolling at Concordia. The Centre would be very interested in working with the Marketing Department or an Enrollment Management Office and contribute to the contents of such materials. We do believe, however, that the skills of a copywriter/design professional are needed to produce quality and effective brochure materials. Any such brochures need to be coordinated with and complimentary to other university publications that are admissions oriented.

- **Posters/Ads**

Since the Centre for Native Education does not travel to remote Native communities, another way of reaching out would be to design a series of university posters which could be sent to band councils, education centres, Native high schools and youth centres. These posters could feature portraits of successful Native students with a quote explaining what they like about Concordia or the Centre for Native Education. These posters could also be used as advertisements in many Native publications. Concordia has had wonderful success with such a marketing strategy in the past using its graduates, faculty and staff as the central ad figures. Why not try the same recruitment approach with a Native student theme targeted to Native communities?

- **Scholarship, award or bursary**

Concordia University has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment in a very concrete manner by financially investing in our students by setting up a Native endowment programme. Many other universities already offer financial aid in the form of awards or bursaries which specifically target their Native student population. We strongly believe that an annual award, be it scholarship or bursary, would serve as a powerful recruitment tool. With the success of the University's Capital Campaign this is the time to endow a new scholarship/bursary and gain recognition for Concordia as *the* Quebec university of choice for Native students.

- **Native Studies Programme**

The Centre for Native Education has long been a proponent of the establishment of a Native Studies programme at Concordia University. While some Quebec universities offer courses with Native content as well as Native-oriented programmes (i.e. teacher training, social work, economic development courses, etc) there is not a single university in Quebec that offers a full Native Studies Programme. The Project on Multiculturalism and Issues of Equity initially put an emphasis on the recruitment of First Nations' students to our School of Graduate Studies and in fact the numbers of Native students pursuing graduate studies has certainly increased. However, every year Concordia is losing a significant number of Native students who chose to pursue their higher education in other provinces because Concordia simply does not offer such a programme. Needless to say, many of these students are applying to universities that offer a Native Studies Programme. The introduction of Concordia's Native Studies Cluster course offerings is a start but a Native Studies Programme is more likely to attract and retain students intending to pursue their higher education in this field. Our students have often remarked on this need with the added comment that any such programme must involve Native faculty and students in its development. This concept was most recently confirmed at a university network meeting of those faculty and staff involved in Native curriculum, services and programmes. Concordia has in place an employment equity programme which encourages applications from women, aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities and more recently a task force on equity issues. The fact remains however that only a half dozen Concordia employees are members of the First Nations of Canada. In order to increase its profile and credibility in Native communities, Concordia needs to hire more Native people, especially faculty. This is becoming a concern with Native students as Concordia's small core of courses with Native content are being taught mostly by non-Native professors.

- **Sensitization & Training**

Whether because of our recruitment programme or as a matter of course due to the demographics in the Native communities, Concordia has increased its Native student population over the past few years. How the University responds to the needs and concerns as well as the increasing demands of these students for quality and culturally appropriate education will be very important. In these last four years, the Centre has noted an increase in the number of issues and complaints brought forward by Native students concerning abusive and racist language, inappropriate course materials, biased curriculum, and pejorative interpretation of texts involving Native content. While these complaints have been dealt with by the Coordinator, one-on-one with the appropriate individuals and university offices, we believe there is a need for a formal critical review of courses, sensitivity and awareness training sessions and forums or other opportunities for open dialogue among the faculty, students and the Centre to voice concerns and differing opinions. At the May network meeting of faculty and staff involved in Native curriculum and services full support was given to the CNE's proposal to engage the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services to help plan and facilitate activities to address these matters in the upcoming academic year.

- **Partnerships**

The Centre for Native Education continues to build a strong reputation in First Nation's communities and organizations by offering outstanding student services to its clientele. Student Services continues to invest substantially in the Centre by improving the physical resources and engaging professional staff. Regular assessment of student needs and services is conducted as part of the Centre's Student Services mandate. However, decisions concerning academic developments and university involvement in Native areas along with the work being done in the Centre for Native Education needs to be shared in a more timely and cohesive fashion. The CNE's effectiveness as a support area for the faculties is in direct proportion to the exchange of planning and information, involvement in special events and programmes and consideration when new policies and procedures are initiated. While it is not always practical for the Centre to collaborate on every venture connected to Native students or Native curriculum there are tremendous advantages to having the Centre at least informed about such matters. More often or not the Centre is approached after the fact or at the eleventh hour for services and financial support or to engage Native students for conferences, visits and other outreach activities, etc. At the last moment is often too late for us to offer suggestions or ideas or most important to coordinate an involvement of our Native students and staff. In keeping with

this goal the Centre will be actively increasing its activities and publicity with faculty and staff in order to better refine and further build this network.

Conclusion

As the Centre will be concluding this two-year recruitment project with the fall '99 outreach visits, we are interested in knowing the university's future plans or investment in recruitment of Native students. The Centre for Native Education wants to continue its involvement and work cooperatively with an Enrollment Management Office in the promotion and recruitment of Native students to Concordia. We believe our contribution could best be made by making promotional visits in the Montreal area Native communities and participating in special events organized by other Native organizations. We can also develop a training programme for Native student workers to accompany admissions counselors on their outings to Native communities and act as a resource for the design of university publications and advertisements directed to potential Native students.

Finally, word-of-mouth is a powerful tool in First Nation's communities. We are convinced that the appreciation of our services is largely responsible not only for student satisfaction but for academic success as well. Oral tradition is still very much alive in Native tradition and success and satisfaction with one's educational institution yields more results in Native communities than almost any other strategy. In fact, a satisfied student's impact on his or her family is considerable and can be measured in the number of brothers and sisters, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives who are presently attending Concordia. In this sense, the Centre for Native Education, well positioned in Advocacy & Support Services, is able to contribute to outstanding retention rates that undoubtedly lead more Native people to apply at Concordia.

A final word of thanks to all of the Native students, support staff and individual faculty who have contributed to the success of this programme.